1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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Plate IX. Mdina. Ramparts and Cathedral.

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Plate X. The Citadel, Rabat, Gozo.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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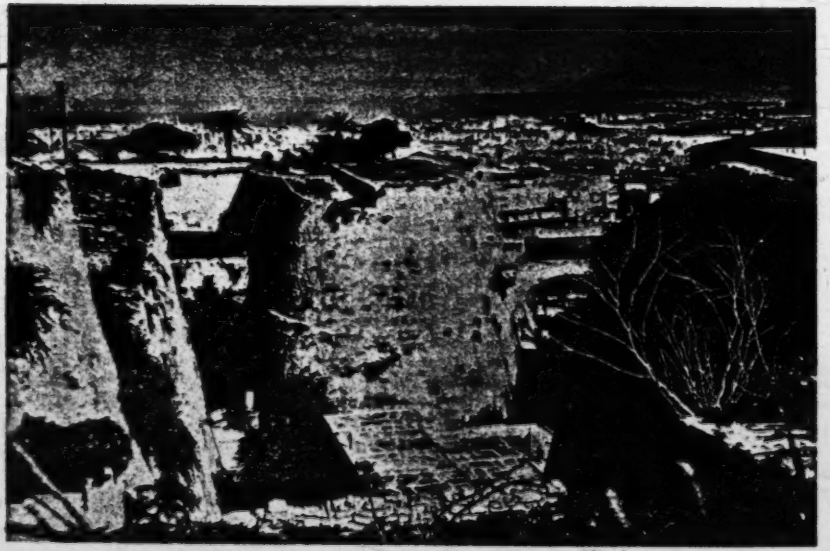

Plate XI. The Bastions, Valletta.

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Plate XII. The Church and Piazza, Żebbar.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the village, which draws in native sons and daughters from all over the country, and often from as far away as Canada and Australia. This loyalty is also evident at other times. Villagers like to think of themselves as a united body, and they take care to protect the appearance of unity before strangers. This is an attitude of which anyone studying the social history of a village becomes keenly aware. Strangers are thus treated with great reserve. The inhabitants of the smaller villages are well known for their reluctance to give any information about their neighbours to strangers. Inquiring visitors are often referred to the parish priest, who, as village spokesman, screens them and, if possible, deals with their questions. The reserve of a village *vis-à-vis* a stranger is considerably more than just an expression of village loyalty. Present also is the very real fear of vengeance should the answer to a stranger's question lead to some unpleasantness for a neighbour. Social relations in a small village are to a very considerable extent governed by the proverb 'Don't make an enemy of your neighbour' (*Taghmilx ghadu lil ġarek*).

In view of this loyalty, it is not surprising that people express their solidarity with their native village by opposition to other villages. A village's traditional rivals are usually those with which it has the most frequent contact. I was almost invariably warned by villagers that the inhabitants of the neighbouring village were a treacherous and savage lot. There are many tales of hostility between neighbouring villages, especially over the celebration of the annual festa, which I dare say have lost nothing in retelling. I was told a number of stories of how youths stampeded goats through their rivals' festa processions, and of expeditions which stole fireworks, attacked street decorations and performed other daring escapades. Although most of these adventures are said to have taken place many years ago, they are no more unusual than some of the incidents that I witnessed.

If the intense inter-village rivalry of former times has abated somewhat, it is probably because increased education and contact outside the villages have helped to break down ignorance and isolation. But this rivalry still lies dormant, and may flare up at the slightest provocation from a traditional rival; I have seen a number of fights over trivial incidents during festas and football matches. The number of police at village feasts and the quantity and density of the barbed-wire entanglements at the Schreiber

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Stadium, where most village football matches are played, are in themselves evidence that fights during these occasions are the rule rather than the exception.

Although there is little formal contact between villages, there is a considerable amount of informal coming and going between their inhabitants. Most inter-village marriages are between partners from neighbouring villages, and the network of kin ties that these form helps to bind the villages of a district together. Inhabitants of neighbouring villages travel to and from work on the same buses, and see each other often at the annual feasts of the district. These multiple relations contribute to a certain district spirit. The most striking example is the unity of the Gozitans, although people from the south of Malta have something of the same spirit of belonging to a particular district. Nonetheless, the knowledge the inhabitants of the southern Maltese villages have of each other cannot be compared to that of the Gozitans, who, for the most part, not only recognize each other by face, name and nickname, but usually know a surprising (and often uncomfortable) amount of personal details about one another.

IV

A person becomes a member of a village by being born there, or marrying or moving into it. The administrative details connected with these acts are quite simple. Parents must register the birth of a child at the local police station, and the parish priest enters the child's name in his register when the baby is baptized, which usually takes place within a few days of its birth. If a man marries into a village, his name will be entered in the parish register, for under Church law the marriage must be performed by the parish priest of the bride, or his delegate. If the couple settles in the husband's village or in a strange village, their names will be recorded on the annual census there, the *status animarum*, which every parish priest prepares for his bishop. All changes of address are supposed to be given (but often are not) to the Rationing Office and, if the person is over twenty-one, to the Electoral Office. No other civil authorities are interested in a person's whereabouts.

In point of fact, however, most people live in the villages into which they were born. This is another respect in which the towns

6: Beeley K-5 (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

SECTION 1 : The Village in Maltese Rural Society.

121 369 Despite the small size of the Maltese Islands, the physical units in which the people live - the towns and villages (Map 1) - possess diverse characteristics. Sometimes administrative, sometimes morphological (i.e. pertaining to the physical arrangement of functional parts), these provide important evidence of the social and economic nature of society. The present report is concerned with rural society and with farming in the Islands where it is clear that the 'village' both reflects and shapes the character of the farmer. The historical evolution of the settlements cannot be examined here but a brief mention must be made of some important historical facts.

175 369 [361] [396] During their rule in Malta, from 1530 to 1798, the Knights of St. John built Valletta (after 1575) and founded an associated dockyard and surrounding towns. These creations have since expanded and merged to become the nucleus of modern Urban Malta. Before 1530, urban society had existed only in the capital, Notabile (Mdina)[1], and in a few large town-villages, none of which lay on the coast or adjoined the Grand Harbour. Nearly the whole of Malta and Gozo had been previously rural in that the population depended [241] [464] on a subsistence, peasant agriculture, with alternative employment existing only in the larger settlements or in the little harbour at the Borġo (Cospicua). Under the Knights, Valletta on the coast succeeded Notabile in the centre of the Island as capital; and the large town-villages (by pre-1530 standards) of Żebbuġ, Siġġiewi, Żejtun, and Żurrieq declined in relative importance.

[161] [396] [434] [712] [707] Little change otherwise occurred until the century and a half of British rule during which the Valletta nucleus and associated townships became dominant and the increase in the population accelerated[2]. The national economy became overwhelmingly dependent on the naval and commercial dockyards in the first place and, later, on the army and air-force bases[3]. Thus the old rural settlements became relatively if not absolutely of little importance.

RURAL SOCIETY

369 241 433 It is reasonable to talk of the farming communities as being synonomous with 'rural' settlements in Malta but the position demands more precise definition. Certainly the largest part of the Maltese rural-dwelling population has been based on agriculture - whether the peasant subsistence of the past or the commercial farming of today. Peasant subsistence farming in small-holding units, supplying almost all the needs of the family working the farm, is a type of farming in which money plays little or no part. It has faded very rapidly

36 This type of core area therefore, as defined in these examples is the basic pattern in all villages throughout Malta and Gozo.

103 361 178 In a consideration of the present scene within the Maltese village it is essential to be aware, at all stages of the argument, of the evolution of the settlements concerned. In the Żurrieq case it is clear that the main village block is extending in several directions, notably northward past the school and south-westward towards the small hamlet of Migret. This latter is already linked by a continuous built-up stretch to the main village and thus contrasts with Bubaqra which remains morphologically [578] independent. In the case of some of the larger villages, Żebbuġ and Żejtun are two notable examples, the completion of this kind of merging of nuclei accounts for present intra-village sectionalism. Thus Żebbuġ (Malta) is a compound of three ancient village nuclei, Hal Muxi, Hal Mula and Hal Dwieli. The very title of 'Hal', or 'village', still given to these parts of what is now a single village reflects their original separate independence. They have grown together over the centuries and have been unified by the construction of a Parish Church and the appearance of a new 'township' core in the central area. Similarly Żejtun has three component parts, Ta'Fuq (Upper), Ta'Isfel (Lower), and Ta' Wara l-Knisja (Behind the Church): the present large Parish Church has been built in the space remaining between the merging older nuclei. The distinction here is clearly morphological rather than administrative but is nevertheless not to be ignored in a study of social structure and affiliation in a static and conservative community.

Merging between fully independent villages has also occurred. Balzan-Birkirkara and Pawla-Tarxien are examples, but here the administrative and affiliatory distinctions have been maintained. At a higher level still the merging of the settlements comprising the Urban area, begun in the nineteenth century but more rapid in the twentieth, is the major feature of modern settlement growth in Malta (R/561).

Rabat in Malta, and Rabat (Victoria) in Gozo, illustrate another aspect of settlement evolution where morphological [712] facts bear on social structure. In both cases the 'suburb of the citadel' ('Ir-Rabat tal-Imdina') grew to large-village size outside the Walls of the central fortified stronghold of each Island. In Malta, Rabat remained as the main rural centre after the capital had moved to Valletta, with ancient Mdina itself remaining a quiet residential back-water.

000 In Malta the countryman still regards Rabat as an

In Malta the countryman still regards Rabat as[15] an
178 unofficial capital of the rural areas of his Island; markets
361 are still held there even though the main ones have
[443] gravitated to Valletta and the urban area. The annual
'Imnarja', traditionally one of the main events in the
farmers' social calendar, is held nearby[16], while the
ancient importance of the Church is reflected in the large
number of clergy, churches, confraternities and third orders
• [712] found there (Appendix 4). In Gozo, Rabat is the adminis-
trative, cultural and economic capital with the old
fortified 'Castello' now in large part a deserted ruin.

369 The differing extent to which the villages of Malta and
178 Gozo have been influenced economically by the industrial and
urban developments of the dockyard areas and towns are
paralleled in the social plane. Traditionally rural centres
such as Qormi, Żabbar and Birkirkara have undergone increasing
social and cultural attraction towards Valletta and the Urban
area along with economic 'de-ruralization' by virtue of their
proximity to the towns and harbours. The improvements in
amenities and especially in transport facilities have tended
to link these Fringe settlements to the Urban area rather
than to the countryside which produced them (B/381).

361 A further type of village is exemplified by St. Paul's
178 Bay. This began as a summer-time resort for town and city
dwellers during the nineteenth century but attained a
sufficient permanence and size to be granted full parochial
status in 1905. The analogy in Gozo is Marsalforn though
this settlement is perhaps half a century behind St. Paul's
Bay in development and presents in winter time the appearance
of almost a ghost-town with only a few permanent farmer and
fishermen residents.

Birżebbuġa is a class on its own, having grown in the
past few decades upon largely non-agricultural foundations
of the British and United States' bases, oil installations
and some small-scale industry.

128 Using this type of analytical approach, a classification
361 of the villages of Malta and Gozo on the basis of their
origin and socio-functional characteristics becomes possible
(Richardson (B/561) goes into greater detail concerning the
evolution of settlement in Malta itself and considers the
development of the present pattern in the light of population
growth and movement and other historical factors.)

712 (1) Medieval Capital Fortresses - Mdina in Malta and
175 the Castello in Gozo. Both occupy central eminences in
[361] their respective Islands and were used as capitals by the
Arabs (in Malta 870-1090) and by the various rulers of Malta
712 between 1090 and the coming of the Knights of St. John in
1530. The former is today a tranquil, residential

712 museum-piece; the latter ruined apart from the Cathedral and the Law Courts.

361 175 (2) Attached to each of the two fortresses there grew up at an early date suburbs which themselves achieved the status of independent settlements. Rabat is still an important locus for the farming community of rural Malta, while the Rabat in Gozo (or Victoria as it is now known) is the largest settlement in that Island and the only one with any urban features.

361 175 103 (3) The medieval town-villages of Malta, other than Rabat, were granted parochial status in 1436. This pattern of large agricultural villages formed the basis of the economic life of the times and even today they retain a strong flavour of the "Old Malta". They were Birkirkara, Qormi (split 1935), Żejtun, Żurrieq, Żebbuġ, Gudja, Naxxar and Siġġiewi. The parallel group of villages in Gozo included Xewkija (1678), Għarb (1679), and Żebbuġ, Xagħra, Nadur and Sannat (all 1688).

(4) Soon after the arrival of the Knights in 1530 building in the Three Cities and on the Xiberras Peninsula began. Thus Senglea (1581) and Cospicua (1584) were given parochial status (Vittoriosa had been one of the two 'parishes' of 1090) and the Valletta parishes of St. Paul and St. Dominic were established on the Peninsula in 1585 and 1587.

(5) Chronologically, the next development was the 'filling-in' of the rural scene with new village centres during the rule of the Knights. In all, thirteen such parishes were established in Malta and ten of these were in what are now the Fringe and Inner Rural areas. They were Tarxien and Kirkop (both 1592), Lija (1594), Għargħur, Safi and Mqabba (all 1598), Mosta (1608), Żabbar (1615), Qrendi (1618), Għaxaq (1626), Luqa (1634), Balzan (1655), and Dingli (1678).

(6) After this spate of parish-building in the hundred years 1580-1680 there was a gap of a century and a half before any new parishes were created. The list then reflects very closely the growth of the Urban area under British rule after 1800 (v. Appendix 1A, and Map 3). Of the eighteen new parishes in Malta eleven were Urban and three in the Fringe zone. The new Urban settlements were Floriana (1844), Msida & Pieta (1867), Sliema (1878, 1918, and 1940), Hamrun (1881), St. Julian's (1891), Kalkara (1898) Pawla (1910), Marsa and Gżira (both 1913); in the Fringe zone came Birżebbuġa (1913), Santa Vennera (1918), and Marsaskala (1949). Other foundations in Malta were Marsaxlokk (1897) and the three new villages in the north -

159 434 Present relative prosperity due to personal acumen, interest in stock and to guaranteed prices maintained by M.M.U. No great need for capital nor much possibility of accumulating capital. Utilises marginal land and family labour in a reasonably efficient way within local conditions. Will not be succeeded by sons, but represents a not unsatisfactory temporary response to the socio-economic conditions which have increased the production of fresh milk in Malta.

CASE V : Anglu (A landless, urban, small-scale goats' milk producer.)

Anglu supports a wife and ten children on the proceeds of the milk of some four dozen goats. His serious financial position shows no possibilities of improvement.

159 234 443 712 551 656 His father was a herdsman and sold milk from door to door in Valletta from a base in the defensive ditch or "fossa" round the city which, incidentally, earned the family the nickname of "Tal-fossa". Some sixty years ago the Government forbade the keeping of goats in Valletta and the family moved some two miles. They continued to take their milk into the capital however until pasteurization began in 1938[41] and Valletta became a "Closed Area" (v. Case IV). Since then Anglu has endeavoured to make a living on the milk sold to the M.M.U.

159 423 434 432 Unfortunately, however, he does not have a substantial land-holding which he can put to the production of fodder crops. He must thereby buy in all his requirements and spends some £400 per year on various types of fodder against a total annual income from the milk of £750. The only supplementary item of profit is a small quantity of prickly pear fruit sold from door to door near his farm. He himself holds a single tomna of cultivable land which barely supplies his own family with a few vegetables. The position of his farm within the urban area makes it impossible for him to obtain additional cultivable plots to put to fodder. They are both scarce and subject to pilfering in such a district. Moreover, the position far from grazing land is a serious drawback for, as he observes, "grazing improves the yield of milk."

159 452 Anglu's farm and family budget is dominated by DEBT (v. Section 3). The fodder has to be purchased from agents who will give credit terms. Other farmers would accept a smaller price but would demand cash on delivery. The bills for fodder and other items are settled as the money from the M.M.U. comes in (fortnightly, in most cases) but Anglu's account never shows a credit balance although it fluctuates from season to season. The table given in the Summary illustrates the progress of his debt over some nine months of 1957. It shows that on 1.9.1957 he still owed nearly £80 to one of his two dealers. This was not finally paid

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

some sculptured escutcheon; the old stone *fougasses*[1] to be encountered along the coast; even the very cliffs; even tiny Comino, from whose stony fields, where is cultivated the cumin seed from which the island takes its name, there rises one of the massive square keeps which the Knights scattered throughout their territory.[2]

The casals are, as has been said in an earlier chapter, not villages, but compact stone townships of tall houses and narrow streets, solidly built in good substantial Baroque architecture. Their outskirts, as likely as not, are dignified with some ancient country-house concealed behind high walls amid charming gardens—the beauty and seclusion of the Maltese gardens are justly proverbial—while the focus of the casal, both literally and metaphorically, is the parish church. This is generally a great Baroque pile of golden sandstone flanked by two massive towers, but an exception is the Parish Church of Mosta, built in the classical style in the middle of the nineteenth century mainly by the efforts, both technical and financial, of the villagers themselves to the design of the ingenious Maltese architect Grognet de Vassé mentioned in Chapter II. It is topped by a dome that claims to be the third largest in the world, being surpassed in size only by those of S. Sophia in Constantinople and S. Peter's in Rome, higher internally than the dome of the Roman Pantheon and exceeding by sixteen feet the diameter of that of S. Paul's in London.

[1] Patrick Brydone (*cf.* pp. 143–147) gives an interesting account of this little-known form of coastal defence; "For we found, to our no small amazement, that the rocks were not only cut into fortifications but likewise into artillery to defend these fortifications: being hollowed out in many places into the form of immense mortars. The charge is said to be about a barrel of gunpowder, over which they place a large piece of wood, made exactly to fit the mouth of the chamber. On this they heap a great quantity of cannon balls, shells, or other deadly materials; and when an enemy's ship approaches the harbour, they fire the whole into the air: and they pretend it produces a very great effect, making a shower for two or three hundred yards round that would sink any vessel."

[2] An excellent companion for the exploration of the island is P. Weston's *Walks in Malta*, published in Valetta. Later booklets include Showell Styles, *Walks and Climbs in Malta* (Valetta, 2nd edn., 1952), and H. H. Hick, *Walks in Gozo* (Malta, 1953).

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6
Gozo

that would not disgrace Taormina, or in the summer, when its tangled mass of vegetation forms an almost solid screen of verdure from the blazing sun, it would seem a fitting lair for the daughter of Atlas if it did not rather conjure up, with its figs, its vines, its calamus and its pomegranates, a vision of the Song of Songs.

Certainly Gozo is more fertile, less rocky, more verdant than is Malta. Edward Lear called its scenery "pomskizillious and gromphiberous, being as no words can describe its magnificence." It is not broken up to anything like the same extent by the stone and rubble walls which in the larger island so provokingly conceal gardens and fields from all except aviators. In Gozo it is easy to enjoy wide vistas of green corn and purple clover, of terraced cultivation along the contours of its seven flat-topped hills.

Like Malta, Gozo ends on its south-western coast in sheer rock-faces that rise abruptly as much as 400 feet from the sea. But elsewhere its coast-line is more varied than Malta's, with its pleasant miniature fjords of Xlendi and Xini, the yellow sands of Ramla, the blue lagoon of Qala Dwejra, the mysterious landlocked bay of Kawra, the grim cliffs of Ta Ċenċ and Ras il Wardija. Its architecture, too, is highly characteristic, and although its villages bear a general resemblance to the casals of Malta, they can be distinguished from these by the handsome carved stone balconies which have happily remained one of Gozo's pleasantest and most live traditions. These balconies are a feature throughout the island but are to be seen at their best in the Manderaggio of Victoria, for Gozo, too, has its Manderaggio.

The capital of the island, Rabat or Victoria—Rabat because it is the suburb of the walled fortress above it—sprawls pleasantly at the foot of the great rock on which rises, like Edinburgh Castle, its bastioned and embattled citadel. This high place was designed as a stronghold, a place of refuge from the Barbary pirates, just as were the little hill-towns of the Riviera, Eze and many another, that look down on the

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6
6020

Corniche from heights as inaccessible as nature and man's ingenuity could make them. When the marauders from North Africa ceased to be a menace, the citadel was partly evacuated for the lower town, but happily was never abandoned completely. Even now it contains the cathedral of the diocese and the Law Court and Public Registry, formerly the residence of the Governors of Gozo; and, although many of its ancient houses are in ruins, a few are still inhabited.

One interesting little lane with façades of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was restored by the Government before the outbreak of the Second World War, as has been the handsome Renaissance building facing the entrance to the citadel latterly known as the Bondi Palace, as related at the end of Chapter XIII. One of the houses in the lane at one time belonged, as an inscription testifies, to the soldier Bernard, "*miles Bernardus*," who was killed at the capture of the citadel by the Turks under Sinan Pasha in 1551. When he saw that the fortress could hold out no longer this dauntless man took the lives of his wife and two daughters with his own hand to save them from being sold into captivity, and then fell, fighting to the end. The walls and fortifications of the citadel are happily well preserved.

Gozo was Ogygia or Gaulos to the Greeks, *gaulos* (γαῦλος) being the word the Greeks had for the round merchant-boats of their rivals, the Phœnicians. From Gaulos it became Gaulum to the Romans, then appears on Idrisi's map of 1154 as Ghudash, and in modern Maltese is known as Ghawdex (pronounced Audesh), its Bishop signing as *Episcopus Gaudisiensis*. The shortest ferry-crossing between the two islands is only four miles, yet many Gozitans have never been to Malta while the overwhelming majority of Maltese have never been to Gozo.

The Gozitans are a frugal, thrifty, reserved, at times somewhat (yet not unpleasantly) dour people, who are regarded in Malta in much the same way as the Scots are

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6
Gozo

Among the more accessible survivals of the Order is the large and impressive Fort Chambray, which commands the island's principal port of Mġarr. This stronghold was built, as we have already seen, by Jacques de Chambray, one of the last of the great Admirals of the Order, when he was Governor[1] of Gozo in the middle of the eighteenth century so that the island should no longer be at the mercy of every raiding enemy. Not that Fort Chambray had ever to endure a siege at the hands of the Barbary pirates. Its value in that direction was mainly a prophylactic one. But it did serve a military purpose during the death-pangs of the Order in 1798, when the Gozitans under their Governor and three of the Knights shut themselves up within its walls, determined to hold out as long as they could against the surprised French, who had not expected any resistance.

Then there is the Banca Giuratale, a graceful, semicircular Baroque structure which Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena erected at the end of the main square of Victoria as the offices of the Jurats of Gozo. Another was until 1943—alas, that the past tense has to be used here—the charming manor outside Xewkija known as the Torri Gourgion. Although it had fallen somewhat from its high estate and had been reduced to the status of a farmhouse, this unspoiled piece of seventeenth-century rural architecture, embellished by a charming well, yet retained externally all the dignity of that lordly epoch. Its stone drop-boxes alternating with elaborate stone escutcheons, its tall staircase tower topped by a conspicuous dome, its suggestion of the fortified country-house —all these features made it the only structure of its kind in the Maltese Islands.

It is indeed lamentable that it should have had to be razed to the ground in 1943, not by enemy action but to make room for a temporary American aerodrome required in

[1] The Governor of Gozo, known in Maltese as the Hakem, lived in the house in the Citadel which, as has been said, is now the Law Court and Public Registry.